

MIDWEST CENTER FOR HEALTH SERVICES & POLICY RESEARCH

NATIONAL NEWS

Kizer Leaves VA

While many health services researchers were attending the AHSR meetings in Chicago, rumors began to spread that Dr. Kizer, Under Secretary for Health in the Department of Veterans Affairs, asked President Clinton to withdraw his nomination for a second term. These rumors were soon confirmed as faxes of Dr. Kizer's letter to the President and a Washington Post article began to circulate. Dr. Kizer came to VA in 1994. His "Prescription for Change" moved the VA health care system from its traditional inpatient focused care to outpatient care by opening hundreds of community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs). In his letter to the President, Kizer wrote, "... we have markedly expanded

access to care, substantially increased the number of veterans treated, significantly improved service satisfaction and fundamentally changed the culture of VA health care."

Dr. Kizer was a firm supporter of VA's Research and Development program. His commitment to implementing evidence-to-action to improve patient outcomes resulted in the funding of the Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI), as well as many other research initiatives.

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Until Dr. Kizer's replacement is named, Dr. Thomas Garthwaite (formerly the Deputy Under Secretary) will serve as the Acting Under Secretary for Health.

U.S. Medicine Highlights QUERI

The July 1999 issue of *U.S. Medicine* (Volume 35, No. 7) contains an article, "QUERI: Putting Evidence into Medical Practice," a full-featured article highlighting the Quality Enhancement Research Initiative. In this article, Drs. Feussner and Demakis discuss the origins of QUERI, define the ultimate objective of the program, review the specific aims of the eight initial target disease conditions, and expand on the close link between research and quality patient care. For health services researchers who are not familiar with QUERI, the article contains an excellent foundation for understanding the concept and fundamentals of this research initiative.

Visit MCHSPR on the Internet

<http://research.bines.med.va.gov/bsrd>

Visit the VIREC on the Internet

<http://www.virec.research.med.va.gov>

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Field Program Reviews Scheduled

The Directors and Associate Directors of the HSR&D Centers of Excellence are scheduled to meet in an interactive review session September 22-23 in Washington. The meeting will focus on a review of the FY 2000 – FY 2004 strategic plans that were submitted to Headquarters in July. The strategic plans will be reviewed by a committee of nationally recognized health services researchers. The membership of the committee includes: Drs. Kerry Kilpatrick (Chair), Carolyn Clancy, Daniel Deykin, Seth Eisen, Rita Hays, Lee Sechrest, and Norton Spritz. Each Field Program is scheduled to have 30 minutes with the site team. After the reviews, a planned fall Directors' meeting will follow on September 23, 2:00 – 10:00 p.m.

The National Research and Development meeting will be held at the Oakbrook Hills Conference Center in Chicago, beginning late afternoon on November 1 until approximately noon on November 3. This event, held once every two years, brings together all four services under Research and Development (Medical Research, Health Services Research and Development, Cooperative Studies, and Rehabilitation Research and Development) to discuss crosscutting issues, review administrative processes, and set future priorities. Dr. John Feussner, Chief Research and Development Officer, will host the event.

Annual HSR&D Meeting Scheduled

The 18th Health Services Research and Development Meeting will be held March 22-24, 2000 at the Renaissance Washington DC Hotel. The host for this year's meeting is San Antonio's Veterans Evidence –Based Research Dissemination Implementation Center (VERDICT), one of the newest Centers of Excellence funded by Headquarters. The theme for this year's meeting is: Systematizing Quality in Health Care: Approaches that work. A call for abstracts will be issued in September, along with registration material. For information regarding registration or hotel accommodations, please call Karen Hickey, HSR&D Special Projects Office at (410) 642-1018. Individuals who are interested in presenting special interest groups or workshops should contact Evaristo Vasquez from the VERDICT at (210) 617-5314.

The Midwest Center for Health Services and Policy Research has reopened its search for a new Director. Please see the insert for more details.

MCHSPR
NEWS

Staff Accomplishments

Dr. Arthur Elstein received the UIC College of Medicine's 1999 Distinguished Faculty Award. The award recognizes the highest level of academic achievement among the Chicago campus' faculty. MCHSPR congratulates Dr. Elstein on this outstanding accomplishment.

Dr. Teresa Pape (former pre-doctoral student) submitted her LOI to DOD "Functional Outcome Following a Severe Traumatic Brain Injury" and it was approved to go on to a full proposal.

Dr. Vince Freeman's (current Career Development Awardee) DOD-VA grant "Prostate cancer in Nigerians, Jamaicans, and U.S. Blacks" was funded with a priority score of 1.5 and in the 97%!

Dr. Charles Bennett will serve as the moderator of the Second Annual Cancer Care Symposium to be held in Chicago on November 12, 1999. This year's focus: "Cancer Reaching Medically Underserved Populations: Low Literacy and Culturally Specific Barriers."

Guihan Named to Task Force

VA's National Clinical Guideline Advisory Council first met in February 1998. At their first meeting, they split into six subgroups: Adoption and Adaptation, Guideline Revision, Implementation and Education, Measurement, Information Management, and Research and Evaluation.

The Implementation and Education subcommittee has identified 5 major objectives including:

- 1) Working with Networks to identify local innovations or variations, which are demonstrated to improve care and outcomes;
- 2) Developing and coordinating a plan to ensure dissemination of VHA and

appropriate non-VHA guidelines;

- 3) Making recommendations and facilitate education pertaining to guidelines issued and/or updated;

- 4) Assisting in the identification of barriers to guideline implementation and recommendation of actions to eliminate them; and

- 5) Consulting on studies to identify effective methods and strategies for implementing clinical practice guidelines.

Dr. Marylou Guihan, MCHSPR investigator, has agreed to work with the taskforce on objectives 4-5, listed above.

Cooperative Study of VA Home Care Hosts Close-Out Meeting

Researchers working on the Cooperative Studies Program Project #003 – A Multi-Site Randomized Trial of Team Managed Home Based Primary Care (TM/HBPC) Study met in Chicago in late June for one last time. The purpose was to attend the Study Closeout Meeting, to discuss the results of the study and the final report, and to bid farewell to friends and acquaintances made over several years. For some, it was the first and, maybe, final chance to talk in-person with some of the individuals with whom they communicated via telephone, teleconferencing, and fax over the course of the project.

Drs. Susan Hughes and **Frances Weaver**, Study Co-Chairpersons reviewed the objectives of the project with participants which involved a multi-site randomized trial of veterans who are severely disabled, terminally ill, or who have severe CHF or COPD. Participants were randomized to either VA home based primary care or customary care. It was hypothesized that patients who received TM/HBPC would experience significantly lower total costs of care than the control group largely as a result of acute care savings.

A Final Progress Report was issued in early June and presented to meeting attendees for discussion. However, dissemination of results from the study will be on a limited basis until publication of a final manuscript. Further information on the study may be obtained from **Dr. Frances Weaver**, Acting Director, MCHSPR at 708-202-2414 or e-mail at weaver@research.hines.med.va.gov. Additional information on study results will be highlighted in future issues of this publication.

New Staff

MCHSPR would like to welcome aboard **Margaret Browning**, SCI QUERI Project Manager, **Katie Chivington**, Research Assistant, **Jeffery Erdman**, Project Manager of the Assisted Living Project, **Mary Jo Lopez**, MCHSPR Program Assistant, **Charlesnika Mayfield**, SCI QUERI Research Center Coordinator, **Jorge Parada, MD**, WOC Appointment, **Bridget Smith**, SCI QUERI Cost Variability Project Manager, **Lisa Stroud**, VIREC Program Assistant, and **Kevin Stroupe, PhD** Health Economist.

Students who worked in MCHSPR for the summer included: **Pooja Jain**, **Elizabeth Kessler**, **Sammy Moltz**, **Saidy Waite**, and **Stephanie Webber**.

ON A MORE
PERSONAL
NOTE

Annual Picnic a Great Success

July 15th was a balmy summer day, perfect weather for the HSR&D Annual Picnic. **Cindi Fiandaca**, and **Patti Murphy** did a great job of organizing the event. The grill team this year, affectionately know, as “Team Brand” comprised of: **Scott Miskevics**, **Dave Williams**, **Tom Sindowski**, **Katie Chivington**, **Jeff Erdman** and **Jonathan Thomas**, kept up with the hungry demands of the picnic goers. **Gay Watkins** organized exciting games of egg toss & water balloon toss and had several games just for kids. Thanks go out to all who participated and helped make this year’s picnic a great success!

Deadlines

Letters of Intent	Anytime
IIR Grants	May 1 and November 1
Appeals	Within 6 weeks after notification of results
Investigator Initiated for New Staff	Anytime---within one year of appointment
Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholars	Discuss with Field Program Director
HSR&D Dissertation Fellowship	April 1

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From the VIREC...

Steering Committee Meets

On June 30, 1999, exactly one year into its funding, the VA Information Resource Center (VIREC) held its first face-to-face Steering Committee meeting. The purpose of the annual event was to review the progress made during the course of the first year and to plan future activities and priorities for years two and three. The VIREC Steering Committee is comprised of nationally recognized database experts who provide advice and direction for the VIREC staff. Steering Committee members for the VIREC are: Bruce Ripley (Chair), Carol Ashton, M.D., Paul Barnett, Ph.D., Sam Georgeson, MPA, Howard Green, M.D., A. Marshall McBean, M.D., Catherine Pfeil, Ph.D., and Ralph Swindle, Ph.D.

The meeting was opened by Bruce Ripley, Director, Planning System Support Group, Office of Policy and Planning, who made welcoming remarks. **Joe Kubal**, Center Manager, reviewed the day's agenda. Presentations were made by **Denise Hynes, Ph.D.** and **Diane Cowper, MA**, VIREC Co-Directors, on the progress of the four Service Lines within the Center: Web Site, Customer Service, Research, and Promotion and Dissemination. **Pat Murphy** and **Mike Kerr**, VIREC Health Information Analysts, reported on their ongoing reliability and validity studies of the Decision Support System (dSs) and the National Patient Care Database (NPCD). After lunch, new initiatives and priorities for the coming year were discussed. It was the consensus of the Steering Committee that emphasis be placed on user access to both dSs and the Pharmacy Benefits Management (PBM) databases, the updating of the database inventory, VIREC support to the QUERI, and the continuing database documentation of the NPCD.

VIREC Presents at IT Conference

The annual Information Technology Conference (ITC) was held in Austin, Texas the week of August 9th. VIREC staff, en masse, attended this year's event. To promote the existence, mission, and goals of the Center, staff took turns at the exhibit booth to disseminate literature about HSR&D and the VIREC, encourage conference participants to "surf" the VIREC Home Page, and answer numerous questions about Center activities. **Diane Cowper, MA**, and **Denise Hynes, Ph.D.** gave an oral presentation entitled, "Overview of the VA Information Resource Center," during one of the breakout sessions. The ITC provides an excellent opportunity to learn about new initiatives and technologies in VA.

HSRDATA Mail Group

HSRDATA is an unmoderated e-mail group conceived of and developed by Dr. Ralph Swindle to enable health services researchers to discuss VA and non-VA database issues and problems. HSRDATA has physically moved and now is being maintained by the VIREC.

If you are a current subscriber, you already should have received e-mail verification that you are a member. The HSRDATA list address is hsrdata@virec.research.med.va.gov and should be used to post messages to the mail group. If you are not presently a subscriber and are interested in participating in this discussion group, please send an e-mail message to listserv@virec.research.med.va.gov. On the first line of the message, type the command, "SUBSCRIBE HSRDATA" (without quotes). Additional information about the mail group can be obtained by contacting **Jill Palmer**, Mail Group Custodian at the VIREC by phone at (708) 202-2413 or by e-mail at palmer@research.hines.med.va.gov.

From the SCI QUERI...

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is comprised of a well balanced mix of clinicians and researchers including: **Frances M. Weaver, Ph.D.**, Acting Director, Midwest Center for Health Services & Policy Research, Hines VA Hospital; Research Coordinating Center Chair, SCI QUERI; Margaret C. Hammond, M.D., Chief Consultant, Spinal Cord Injury & Disorders Strategic Healthcare Group, Seattle VAMC, Clinical Coordinating Center Chair, SCI QUERI; Charles Bugar, M.D., Medical Director, Rehabilitation Research & Development Center, VA Palo Alto Health Care System; John Carswell, Associate Executive Director for Health Care Policy, Paralyzed Veterans of America; **Eileen Collins, Ph.D., R.N.**, Career Development Awardee, Hines VA Hospital; Kurt Fiedler, M.D., Chief, SCI Service, Albuquerque VAMC; **William Henderson, Ph.D.**, Director, Cooperative Studies Program, Hines VA Hospital; Helen Hoenig, M.D., Chief, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Service, Durham VAMC; **W. Edwin Langbein, Ph.D.**, Research Health Scientist, Hines VA Hospital; Marcia Legro, Ph.D., Clinical Coordinating Center Project Manager, SCI QUERI, VA Puget Sound Health Care System; Brian Mittman, Ph.D., Senior Social Scientist, VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, Center for the Study of Healthcare Provider Behavior; Michael Priebe, M.D., Chief, Spinal Cord Injury Service, VA North Texas Health Care Systems; Arthur Sherwood, P.E., Ph.D., Director, Rehabilitation Research and Development Center for Healthy Aging with Disabilities, Houston VAMC; and Deborah Wilkerson, M.A., Vice President of Research & Quality Improvement, The Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission - CARF.

Study Highlight

The Hines QUERI Staff are working with Audrey Nelson, Ph.D., R.N., the Principal Investigator of a VA-funded project entitled "A National Program Initiative to Evaluate Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) and Bowel Management Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPGs)." The purpose of this project is to develop, implement, and evaluate a model to integrate clinical practice guidelines into the routine operation of each SCI center. Four SCI Centers are participating in this effort (Tampa, Miami, Augusta, Seattle). The Hines component led by **Marylou Guihan, PhD**, and **Sherri LaVela** (Project Manager) will be involved in assessing how well implementation worked and the extent to which clinical practice guidelines changed as a function of utilizing the guidelines.

Fran Weaver, Ph.D., SCI QUERI Research Center Chair, has been asked to serve as a member of the Spinal Cord Injury Medicine Consortium panel to develop a clinical practice guideline for annual preventive health evaluations for SCI. The first meeting of this panel was Sept. 24-5 in Washington, D.C.

Marylou Guihan, Ph.D., represented SCI QUERI at the American Paraplegia Society (APS) meetings in Las Vegas, Nevada, Sept. 7-9, 1999. The poster presentation showcased the overall QUERI model including each of the substantive areas as well as our efforts to meet them.